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The Organization
of the Texas
Revolution

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The Organization of the Texas Revolution.¹

BY EUGENE C. BARKER.

As ethnic ties are stronger than political boundaries, it is probable that when Stephen F. Austin settled his first family of Anglo-Americans on the banks of the Brazos, Fate issued her fiat that in the end Texas must belong to the United States; but there can be little question that, save for the rash and impatient policy of Santa Anna, the breach with Mexico might have been indefinitely delayed. For though it is doubtless true that some of those who

¹ The published works used in the preparation of this paper are: A History of Texas, by D. B. Edward, Cincinnati, 1836; A History of Texas, by John Henry Brown, St. Louis; Texas, by William Kennedy, London, 1841; North Mexican States and Texas, by H. H. Bancroft, San Francisco, 1889; and A Comprehensive History of Texas, edited by Dudley G. Wooten, Dallas, 1898. The last is a reprint of Yoakum's History of Texas, with the addition of numerous monographs. For the sake of convenience, references, except to the last, are made by the name of the author rather than by the title of the book.

The documents, from which this paper is mainly written, are to be found in: The Austin Papers, deposited temporarily in the State Library; the Nacogdoches Archives, in the vaults of the State Library; and the Bexar Archives, in the University of Texas. The newspapers referred to belong exclusively to the Austin collection.

took advantage of Mexico's liberal colonization offers did so with the intention of seizing the first opportunity for separation, yet it cannot be denied that the bulk of the settlers, especially in Austin's territory, were animated by a sincere desire to establish their loyalty to the Mexican government. But the turn given to Mexican affairs by Santa Anna between 1833 and 1835 clashed too rudely with Texan hereditary democracy. An independence or war party arose—small, but clamorous—fiercely opposed by the peace party; and then, loyalty becoming gradually silent, was finally forced into active, organized opposition, and the revolution began.

But although the majority of the Texans were to the last honorably faithful to Mexico, there had been as early as 1832 widespread discontent with the enforced legislative and administrative union between Texas and Coahuila; and at the convention held at San Felipe in October of that year a committee, of which Stephen F. Austin was a member, prepared a memorial praying the national congress for their separation, and the elevation of Texas into a state of the Republic. The petitions prepared by this body were never presented to the authorities; but a second convention having been called in April, 1833, the work of the first was practically duplicated and enlarged, and Austin was sent to Mexico to lay the memorial before congress. The neglect of these proposals, the imprisonment of Austin, the disturbed condition of national politics, the disorderly struggle between the rival legislatures of Saltillo and Monclova, and the fear that Texas would be organized as a territory, encouraged the more radical separatists in October, 1834, to propose through their head and mouthpiece, the Political Chief of the Brazos, Henry Smith, that Texas should consider her connection with Coahuila *de facto* dissolved and should proceed to organize herself into a Mexican State under the constitution of

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1824.¹ But the "Grand Central Committee" doubtless voiced the popular mind in its protest² against the unconstitutionality of such a course; for the Texans still felt a good deal of confidence in the republican character of Santa Anna, and Austin's letters were all reassuring. At any rate, the matter was quietly dropped.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS.

By the spring of 1835, however, Santa Anna had gathered the reins of government firmly in his own hands, and to secure himself from opposition, a decree was passed through his pliant congress ordering a reduction of the militia to one soldier for every five hundred inhabitants, the others to be disarmed. The legislature of Coahuila and Texas protested, and was disbanded—avowedly for the fraudulent sale of Texas public land, but really for the purpose of replacing it with representatives favorable to centralism. Governor Viesca was deposed, and the administration of the state fell, after a short interval, into the hands of the military commandant, General Cos.

All this was naturally somewhat disconcerting, but there seems to have been little downright hostility aroused by the action. There was still a hope that the general government would grant the Texans their desires; while all sympathy with Coahuila had disappeared in the intense longing of Texas for separate statehood. An attempt was made, indeed, to make capital out of Governor Viesca's inaugural address³, and his appeal to each of the three departments of Texas to aid him with one hundred armed men in sustaining the civil authority against the military: the translator of the address, under the name of *Coahuiltecanus*, making a few gratuitous remarks of his own, by way of assuring the people that it was the aim of Mexico

¹ Edward, 222-24.

² Edward, 225-31.

³ Texas Republican, May 9, 1835.—Austin Papers.

to separate them from Coahuila, organize Texas as a territory, and then, by repeated insults, to force them into a struggle in which they should either be exterminated or driven from the state, advised them to cling to Coahuila and resist any attempt at separation.⁴ But both the address and the translator's appeal fell flat. The Political Chief of the Brazos coldly informed the governor that the late land deal had smothered any enthusiasm that the people might have had for a states' right conflict⁵; and Henry Austin printed an article cautioning the people against the inflammatory sentiments of Coahuiltexanus, and quoted extracts from Stephen F. Austin's latest letter from Mexico to show that the disposition of the general government was favorable to Texas.⁶ And though the views prompting Henry Austin's advice could well have been influenced by personal interest⁷, it is quite certain that many believed as he did.

For there were now three parties in Texas: The first, composed of men who believed like Austin in the good faith of Mexico, was preëminently a peace party; the second, composed of those who had gradually assumed the attitude of indifferent spectators, determined to take no active part in the family quarrels of Mexico, but standing on the defensive, was a conservative party; and the third, made up of those who believed that Texas could no longer hope for anything save injustice and oppression from the Mexican government, was the independence or war party. The first was comparatively small; the third was of about the same size, but much more active; while the second contained the majority of the inhabitants. The feeling between the two extreme parties was very bitter, and it was rather fortunate than otherwise that the Indians, threat-

⁴ Texas Republican, May 9, 1835.

⁵ Texas Republican, May 9, 1835.

⁶ Texas Republican, May 9, 1835.

⁷ Henry Austin to J. F. Perry, May 5, 1835.—Austin Papers, in the collection of Hon. Guy M. Bryan, Austin, Texas.

ening a renewal of their depredations along the frontiers, drew them closer together and forced the conservatives into action with them.

Danger from this source could be understood by all, and gave no chance for division of opinion. Protective measures had to be adopted immediately; and no assistance could be expected from the government, even had it been desired, Santa Anna being engaged at that time in the reduction of Zacatecas. The colonists were dependent upon themselves alone.

ORGANIZING FOR RESISTANCE.

And so, Mina, situated on the frontier where the danger was most pressing, took the first step toward securing organized resistance by appointing on May 8, 1835, a committee of Safety and Correspondence for the general diffusion of information.⁸ This committee was increased at a meeting held on May 17⁹ by the addition of Edward Burleson and Samuel Wolfenbarger. And on the same day the citizens of Gonzales and Viesca, two other exposed settlements, held meetings and appointed committees of safety and correspondence.¹⁰ It is probable that the two latter places had heard of Mina's action of the 8th, and the coincidence that they should both hold meetings on the same day that Mina had her second meeting will not seem strange when one knows that May 17 fell on Sunday and remembers that Sunday was Mexico's official day for public business. The observation should be made here, too, that in the beginning the object of these committees was solely to facilitate concerted movement against the Indians, and this they accomplished; but a more valuable though incidental service performed by them was the restoration to some extent of the mutual confidence of the

⁸ Brown, I, 290.

⁹ Brown, I, 290. Burnet, in "A Compendium of Texas History," Texas Almanac, 1859, 113, gives May 15 for this date.

¹⁰ Brown, I, 290.

people. For while the bitterness between the war party and the peace party was still great, there doubtless grew up in each a respect for the other and the feeling that all could be depended on to defend their country where the danger was clearly perceived.

Though there is no available record of their organization, it is evident that committees of safety and correspondence spread rapidly, and that by the latter part of June they existed in many of the interior towns and settlements. The natural explanation of their popularity is found in the fact that they were more or less familiar machinery to the colonists: the convention of 1832 had created a central committee and an elaborate system of sub-committees¹¹, and it was through these that the convention of 1833 was called¹². They were continued by this second assembly, and though the sub-committees seem to have soon disappeared, the central committee continued in existence until November 3, 1835, when it was superseded by a quorum of the consultation.

FRICTION OVER CUSTOMS.

In the meantime, although so busily engaged at home, Santa Anna was not unmindful of the value of holding on to Texas, and, besides his diplomatic dalliance with Austin, he dispatched a small company of soldiers in January, 1835,¹³ to take charge of the custom houses at Anahuac and Galveston—doubtless with a view rather to keeping alive the idea of general Mexican control than to the importance of the revenue to be obtained. And in one sense his scheme was successful: the majority of the people acknowledged the legality of the measure and determined

¹¹ Proceedings of the General Convention, 22-23; Gammel's Laws of Texas, I, 496-97.

¹² Brown, I, 231.

¹³ Captain Tenorio to the Commandant of Coahuila and Texas, January 31, 1835.—Bexar Archives. Edward (235) says this was done in the fall of 1834.

to protect and assist the collectors in the discharge of their duties; but in another sense this was the step out of which the rupture with Mexico immediately developed, for the citizens of Anahuac seem to have imagined that theirs was the only port at which duties were collected—though there was certainly a customs officer at Matagorda,¹⁴ and probably one at Velasco,—and the belief that they were suffering a hardship from which the rest of Texas was free, aroused in them a feeling of injustice and injury which was eagerly nursed by the war party.

There had in fact been no attempt to collect customs at Anahuac since the expulsion of Bradburn in 1832, and the path of the new collector was from the beginning an unpleasant one, strewn with some real difficulties and many petty annoyances. Within less than three months of the establishment of the custom house, on April 17, 1835, the Ayuntamiento of Liberty found it necessary to issue a manifesto, urging the people to strict obedience to the revenue laws until they could be reformed in a constitutional manner, and declaring their intention to sustain the collectors.¹⁵ This was probably encouraging to the officers, but any hopes built thereon must have crumbled to earth when the citizens of Anahuac met, on May 4, and resolved, "That the proceedings of the individuals claiming to be Custom House officers at this place have neither been

¹⁴ Ugartechea to Cos, July 25, 1835.—Bexar Archives.

¹⁵ Texas Republican, May 30, 1835. Edward (235-238) prints this document under the date of June 1, and all succeeding historians have followed him. Yoakum (*A Comprehensive History of Texas*, 168) slips into a strange anachronism by declaring that the proclamation was issued in denunciation of the party that expelled Tenorio from Anahuac, though the uniformly accepted date of that act is June 30—and refers to Edward (235) as his authority. Bancroft understood that this proclamation was not issued against Travis, but says later (*North Mexican States and Texas*, II, 156) that the Ayuntamiento of Liberty did condemn him, and carelessly following Yoakum in his reference, cites for confirmation Edward, 235-38, where this document is printed.

reasonable, just, or regularly legal;"¹⁶ and followed this declaration by a memorial to the governor of Coahuila and Texas setting forth the unjust incidence of the tariff, and asking him to use his influence with the general government to secure speedy relief. Another resolution passed at the same time characteristically declared that until this object was accomplished "no duties should be collected in this port, unless the collection is also enforced equally throughout the province, nor until then will we pay any duties upon importations into this port."

As a matter of fact, however, neither memorial nor resolutions ever reached their destination, for the chairman, General William Hardin, having departed for the United States before affixing his official signature to the proceedings, they seem to have been considered invalidated.¹⁷ But reports of the independent attitude of the district having reached General Cos at Matamoras, he wrote, on May 26, to inform the commander of the garrison at Anahuac that the battalion of Morelos would be embarked immediately for Copano, whence they might be distributed through Texas wherever needed, and that he had urged the general government to send additional re-enforcements immediately. In closing he said: "You will operate in every case with extreme prudence, but if by any fatality the public order should be overturned, you are to proceed without any contemplation against whomsoever may occasion it, without permitting for any cause the national arms and decorum to be tarnished."¹⁸ This note was not dispatched until the middle of June, and the express who carried it bore also a letter to the Political Chief of the Brazos, which, after recounting and deploring the necessities that

¹⁶ Texas Republican, August 8, 1835.

¹⁷ Texas Republican, August 8, 1835. It is interesting to note that I. N. Moreland, the Secretary of the Ayuntamiento of Liberty which had so loyally exhorted "all good citizens" some three weeks before to support the revenue collectors, was also secretary of this meeting.

¹⁸ Texas Republican, July 4, 1835.

had demanded Governor Viesca's deposition and imprisonment, appointed him to "take special care of the administration and interior order of the Department" under his charge, until the general government should appoint new authorities.¹⁹ Neither of these papers indicates any desire to oppress the Texans unduly, and it is quite possible that Cos had no other intention than the preservation of order by the enforcement of the law.

The friends of the Anahuac commandant, Don Antonio Tenorio, seized the opportunity, however, to send him congratulatory missives upon his approaching deliverance, and when the messenger arrived at Bexar on June 20 he was entrusted with another from Colonel Ugartechea, informing Tenorio that the government had ordered the advance from Saltillo of the troops that had been used against Zacatecas, and expressing the belief that "these Revolutionists will be ground down." All of which would doubtless have proved comforting to Señor Tenorio. But it was the courier's ill luck on reaching San Felipe, June 21, to fall in with a contingent of the war party; and though he tried to save his dispatches by passing them quickly to a friendly American, he was detected,²⁰ and his captors were soon in possession not only of the letter to the Political Chief but also of the messages to Tenorio.

EFFORTS OF THE WAR PARTY.

Now, the news of Viesca's deposition had arrived some time before and had thrown Texas into the greatest confusion. The war party proposed that the people should arm themselves and march to his assistance, or, if this were impracticable, that they should install as governor the "ex-vice governor," Ramon Músqiz, of Bexar. The peace party and conservatives, on the other hand, were opposed

¹⁹ Texas Republican, July 4, 1835.

²⁰ Gritten to Ugartechea, July 5, 1835.—Bexar Archives.

to any interference whatever, and on account of the differences of opinion the Political Chief, J. B. Miller, had requested each municipality of his department to send five representatives to San Felipe on June 22 to consult with the central committee on the position that Texas should assume.²¹ But in San Felipe the war party was the strongest—officially at any rate. The Political Chief belonged to them,²² while the Ayuntamiento endorsed the plan to install Músqiz and had undertaken to gain for it the support of the central committee.²³ The war party, therefore, were jubilant, believing that the information contained in the captured dispatches would turn popular favor in their direction. Miller, indeed, without waiting to learn the opinion of the meeting that he had called for the next day, issued an inflammatory address to the people, ordering them to arm and march to San Felipe preparatory to an advance on Bexar.²⁴

In the general meeting, however, over which Robert M. Williamson presided on the next day²⁵ these hopes were blasted. Several of the municipalities represented were favorable to the San Antonio expedition, but the majority were inclined to vote against it. Disappointed and angry, therefore, but still determined, the war party managed to break up the meeting before any decisive action had been taken against the project; and then, re-assembling later in the day, they held, according to Edward, a secret meeting of their own,²⁶ with the Political Chief in the chair.²⁷ Their most important measure was the authorization of W. B. Travis to collect a force and expel the garrison at

²¹ Edward, 238.

²² Texas Republican, August 8, 1835.

²³ Edward, 238.

²⁴ Texas Republican, June 27, 1835.

²⁵ Williamson to the People of Texas (a circular), July 4, 1835.

²⁶ Edward, 238.

²⁷ Texas Republican, August 8, and September 26, 1835; *Cos to Ayuntamiento of Columbia*, August 1, 1835.—Austin Papers.

Anahuac before the coming of the re-enforcements,²⁸ a commission that was the more cheerfully received by Travis perhaps, because, as he said, he had already been invited there for the same purpose by some of his friends who were "the principal citizens" of the place, and who "were suffering under the despotic rule of the military."²⁹ He accordingly appeared before the fort with about thirty volunteers late in the afternoon of June 29, and Captain Tenorio having abandoned the fort as untenable retreated to the woods, where he held a council of war and decided that "in view of the difficulty and uselessness of making a defense, a capitulation should be made."³⁰ This was done the next morning, and he and all his men, save twelve, were disarmed and taken to Harrisburg, whence they soon made their way to San Felipe and thence finally to San Antonio. This act was deprecated throughout Texas except by the extreme advocates of independence,³¹ and its immediate effect was to draw the conservatives and the peace party closer together, while it cast the war party into considerable disfavor. A little tact on the part of Mexico at this time would have saved Texas; but Cos could hardly be expected to have known this, and being already suspicious of the colonists, he heard that the Political Chief presided at the meeting which authorized the outrage and concluding—with sufficient reason, perhaps—that it was simply the expression of the popular will, determined to overwhelm the country. When he became informed of the true state of public feeling his dogged insistence—and he was but the agent of Santa Anna—on the

²⁸ Texas Republican, September 26, 1835; Brown, I., 292; Travis to Henry Smith, July 6, 1835 (Quarterly of the Texas State Historical Association, II., 24).

²⁹ Quarterly, II., 24.

³⁰ Tenorio to Ugartechea, July 7, 1835.—Bexar Archives.

³¹ J. H. C. Miller to T. J. Chambers, July 4, 1835.—Bexar Archives; Kennedy, II., 92; A Comprehensive History of Texas, I., 166; Texas Almanac, 1859, 112.

removal of the leaders of the war party to Mexico for trial finally forced all parties into opposition.

PUBLIC MEETING AT COLUMBIA.

In the meantime, on June 22, Miller's hasty proclamation of the 21st reached Columbia, and a town meeting was called for the next day. Upon its receipt, the local war party immediately held a caucus and prepared a set of resolutions of the same tone, which they presented to the meeting next morning with the suggestion that they be officially passed. Henry Austin proposed as an amendment that all action should be postponed until a meeting of the whole jurisdiction could be convened; but this was obstinately refused, and the resolutions having been submitted to a vote, were defeated. They then selected Sunday, the 28th, for a general meeting, and appointing a committee to prepare a report for it, adjourned.³²

The people having duly met in accordance with this call, elected W. D. C. Hall chairman and Byrd B. Waller secretary; and, after reading a letter from the Political Chief and the papers captured from the unfortunate courier the week before, appointed a committee of fifteen³³ to draw up resolutions for the consideration of the meeting. In their report the committee advised "union, moderation, organization, and a strict obedience to the laws and constitution of the land;" protested against the "acts of any set of individuals (less than a majority) calculated to involve the citizens of Texas in a conflict with the Federal Government of Mexico;" and censured particularly the "proceedings of those persons at Anahuac who gave the collector of customs, Don José Gonzalez, a series of resolutions declaring that they would not obey the revenue laws of Mexico." These persons they denounced as "foreigners," and de-

³² Henry Austin to J. F. Perry, June 24, 1835.—Austin Papers, J., 3; Texas Republican, June 27, 1835.

³³ Texas Republican, July 4, 1835. Brown (I., 293) in enumerating this committee omits the name of F. Bingham.

clared themselves the "faithful and loyal citizens of Mexico, disposed and desirous to discharge their duty as such;" and they resolved "that it is the duty of the citizens of Texas to unite in the support of the constitution and laws of their adopted land." And Texas being in such a state of anarchy, "without governor, vice-governor, or council," they proposed to "recognize the Political Chief as the highest executive officer."

This committee is also responsible for the first suggestion of a general convention; they proposed that the Political Chief "be requested to correspond with the other Chiefs of department in Texas, and request them to co-operate with him in electing three deputies from each jurisdiction..... to meet the Chiefs of departments in council, with full powers to form for Texas a Provisional Government, on the principles of the constitution, during the reign of anarchy in the state and that they meet as soon as circumstances will possibly permit." The Political Chief was also to be requested to inform the Mexican government of "their peaceable and loyal disposition, and their great desire to remain attached to the Federal government;" and to command the citizens of his department "to adhere strictly to the laws and constitution of the land."³⁴

W. D. C. Hall, J. A. Wharton, W. H. Jack, J. G. McNeel, and G. B. McKinstry were appointed to wait upon the Political Chief with the views of the meeting; and this duty performed, they were to remain a permanent committee of safety and correspondence. They communicated with Miller in writing, and advised him to send a commission to Cos and Ugartechea assuring them of the peaceful

³⁴ Texas Republican, July 4, 1835. Brown (I., 293) asserts that a majority of the committee drafting these resolutions were in favor of independence, but that they sacrificed their real sentiments out of deference to the conservatives. An examination of their full report will, I think, convince one that their sacrifice, if such it were, was very complete.

inclinations of the Texans; while at the same time the promptest steps should be taken to organize the militia. This, of course, was according to the instructions of the meeting, but they apparently went beyond the officially expressed will of that body in recommending that persons be appointed to "obtain subscriptions and receive money for the purpose of purchasing arms and other munitions of war;" and in requesting him to inform Músquiz that the people of the Brazos department would rally round and support him, if he would undertake the administration of the state government.³⁵ The Political Chief replied that he fully endorsed all their recommendations, save one—that communication be opened with Cos and Ugartechea; but that he would do that, too, if the majority of the people of his department desired it.³⁶ Nevertheless, in a clipping of the *Texas Republican*, I have found a letter dated July 2—just the day before this—in which he informs Cos that the bearer of his dispatches to the Anahuac commandant "was by a few individuals examined and the communications opened;" but he encloses him a copy of the resolutions adopted by a large meeting in his department—very probably the Columbia meeting of June 28,—“which evince the feeling of a large majority of the people,” and promising to send in a few days a special commissioner with full particulars, he closed with the assurance that he would do all in his power “to preserve the public order and tranquility.”

DESIRE FOR A REPRESENTATIVE CONVENTION.

By this time, though the most of the people were still faithful to Mexico, there was a general feeling of apprehensiveness, and the necessity for a convention was appreciated by all. On July 4, the committee of safety at Mina issued an address to the *Ayuntamientos* of the de-

³⁵ *Texas Republican*, July 18, 1835.

³⁶ *Texas Republican*, July 18, 1835.

partment of Brazos deploring "the evils that might result from the schisms that had taken place;" declaring that the mutual "confidence as well as the mutual respect between them and their fellow-citizens of the Mexican republic" had been destroyed by the "misconduct of a few designing men;" and urging the immediate call of a consultation "at San Felipe, or some other central place."³⁷ And curiously enough, on this same day the committee of safety at Gonzales was writing to the Mina committee, and while assuring it of their utmost confidence in the good will of Mexico, they considered it as "of vital importance that a Convention be immediately called," and were of the opinion that the place of its meeting "should be without the bounds of the San Felipe Junto."³⁸ An editorial notice in the *Texas Republican* of the same date says, "we think every honorable means should be resorted to in order to avert the impending storm."

Now, in addition to the pacific recommendations of the jurisdiction of Columbia on June 28, the *Ayuntamiento* of that town held a meeting on July 11 and resolved that "it is deemed expedient by this body to take prompt and efficient measures to open an immediate correspondence with the Mexican authorities, that they be informed of the true sentiments of a great majority of the people of this Department and as soon as practicable that of all Texas." And a committee consisting of John A. Wharton, James F. Perry, Josiah H. Bell, Sterling McNeal, and James Knight was selected to lay the views of the *Ayuntamiento* before the "chairman of a public meeting" to be held at San Felipe "on Tuesday the 14th." They were convinced that order could not be restored without a consultation of representatives from all Texas, and the committee was instructed to insist that this be brought about with the "utmost expedition." In their letter to the chairman of

³⁷ *Texas Republican*, July 18, 1835.

³⁸ *Texas Republican*, July 18, 1835.

this meeting the Ayuntamiento professed themselves and the citizens of their jurisdiction to be "true, faithful, loyal, and unoffending Mexican citizens;" they did not break the laws and constitution themselves, and would not countenance others in doing so.³⁹

At about the same time—July 12—Cos, who had not yet heard of the expulsion of Tenorio, issued a general circular to the three departments of Texas in which he warned the people against being led into hasty action against the government by the falsehoods of "turbulent foreigners." He reminded them of the liberal concessions that had been made to Texas, and explained that, if the government introduced more troops into Texas, it would simply be for the purpose of establishing the custom houses.⁴⁰

The San Felipe meeting of July 14 passed resolutions entirely consistent with those already adopted by the Columbia meeting on June 28 and the Columbia Ayuntamiento on July 11. They "disapproved all hostile proceedings that may have been made for offensive operations against the government," avowed an earnest desire for peace, and recommended a quiet submission to the "constitution, laws, and proper authorities of the country." They agreed in the necessity for a consultation, and appointed J. R. Jones, J. W. McKinney, and A. Somervill a committee to confer with the delegates from Columbia, "& all other committees, with full power to call a meeting of all the citizens of Texas."⁴¹ This joint committee met the next day, and thinking it advisable to wait for the arrival of other delegates before any decisive step was taken toward the calling of a convention, they issued a circular, saying that they believed there was "no just cause to expect an invasion of Texas from the Federal forces;" and

³⁹ Texas Republican, July 18, 1835.

⁴⁰ Texas Republican, August 22, 1835.

⁴¹ Texas Republican, July 18, 1835. Brown (I., 295-96) prints a set of proceedings for this meeting, which, while agreeing to some extent with these, are evidently drawn from an entirely different source.

that when they were joined in a few days by other committees they would make a full exposition of affairs.⁴²

In the meantime while these two delegations were awaiting the arrival of others, the Political Chief, J. B. Miller, was adding his efforts to theirs to reassure both the Texans and the Mexicans. He circulated a proclamation "commanding and exhorting all good citizens. . . . to remain strictly obedient to the constitution and laws, . . . and to engage in no popular excitement."⁴³ And then feeling, doubtless, that his advice was inconsistent with his proclamation of June 21, and with some of his later imprudent actions, he frankly admitted that he had then too hastily yielded to the influence of his friends.⁴⁴ The following extracts from his letter to Colonel Ugartechea, on July 16, will show that the Mexicans did not enjoy a monopoly in the use of diplomatic flattery: He says, "I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication under date of the 7th of July, which I received with great pleasure. I have caused it to be printed and published throughout my department. . . . I . . . am happy to inform you that this department is perfectly tranquil, and I pledge myself that it shall remain so. Your esteemed communication has satisfied every person and has enabled me to tranquilize my department."⁴⁵

Miller finally wound up his contradictory career by resigning, on July 19, in favor of Wily Martin, the Alcalde having, as he said, refused to serve as Political Chief.⁴⁶

⁴² Texas Republican, July 18, 1835.

⁴³ Newspaper Clipping.—Austin Papers. The proclamation is dated simply "July, 1835," but must have been issued about the same time as his letter to Ugartechea.—July 16

⁴⁴ Texas Republican, August 8, 1835.

⁴⁵ Newspaper Clipping.—Austin Papers.

⁴⁶ Newspaper Clipping.—Austin Papers. An anonymous writer in the Texas Republican of September 26, 1835, fiercely denounced Miller's whole course, and this action in particular; claiming that the Alcalde had no constitutional right to refuse to serve, but that even then Martin, who was only fourth Regidor, could have succeeded to the office only after it had been refused by the first three Regidores.

On July 17, D. C. Barrett arrived at San Felipe to represent Mina in the joint committee conference, and he, with the committees from Columbia and San Felipe, the members of the latter having been increased to five, entered into a four days' session.⁴⁷ It will be remembered that the Columbia delegation had been instructed to urge the speedy call of a convention, and that the original San Felipe committee had been appointed for that purpose with full powers to act. When John A. Wharton moved the call of a convention, however, this motion was defeated, because it was thought that such an act would be regarded by the authorities as preliminary to a rebellion.⁴⁸ They attempted to fulfill their promise of making an exposition of the affairs of Texas, but failed for want of facts;⁴⁹ and then united in dispatching to Cos, at Matamoras, D. C. Barrett and Edward Gritten with conciliatory letters. They also drew up a kind of résumé of the late disturbances, and called upon all honest citizens to observe the laws and constitution. This was somewhat tardily issued as a proclamation by the chairman and acting Political Chief, Wily Martin, on August 15.⁵⁰

MEXICAN BLUNDERS.

But just when events in Texas seemed now in a train for peace, the government took the step which antagonized every citizen. On July 24, Tenorio, who had received the order from Santa Anna through Cos and Ugartechea, applied to the Political Chief for the arrest of Lorenzo de Zavala, a political refugee who had arrived in Texas during the early part of the month. Martin declined to make the arrest on the ground that he lacked authority; but the

⁴⁷ For the names of all these delegates see Brown, I., 300.

⁴⁸ Bancroft, North Mexican States and Texas, II., 162.

⁴⁹ A Comprehensive History of Texas, I., 168-69.

⁵⁰ Edward, 239-45. It is possible that these proceedings were published earlier and that Martin re-issued them on August 15 to influence the meeting that assembled on that date.

general attitude was so quiet and peaceful that Dr. J. H. C. Miller was deceived into thinking that by a slight show of firmness the authorities could gain all that they desired. He wrote therefore, on July 25, to John W. Smith of Bexar, and requesting him to show the letter to Ugartechea, said that if the demand were insisted upon at this time, the Texans would surrender not only Zavala, but the leaders of the war party, Johnson, Williamson, and Travis also; as well as Samuel Williams who was at this time obnoxious to Texans and Mexicans alike as the reputed leader of the great land speculation.⁵¹ Ugartechea acted on the suggestion, and, on July 31, dispatched a circular to the different Alcaldes of the departments of Nacogdoches and Brazos, commanding them to arrest these parties and turn them over to Tenorio, who was still at San Felipe. The express bearing these orders was met by the peace commissioners, Barrett and Gritten, at Gonzales on August 1, and realizing immediately how the demand would be received by the people, they detained him until Gritten could hasten on to San Antonio and vainly try to persuade Ugartechea to countermand or modify his orders.⁵² The worthy Colonel, indeed, had little option in the matter; at least, in so far as it concerned Zavala and Travis: for His Excellency the President had ordered the arrest of the former, and the order was re-issued to Ugartechea by Cos on August 8, with instructions to execute it even "at the risk of losing all his cavalry;"⁵³ while, on August 1, Cos had urged the Ayuntamiento of Columbia to secure the "apprehension of that ungrateful and bad citizen W. B. Travis," in order that he might be taken to Bexar and punished according to the law.⁵⁴ The two commissioners delayed in San Antonio

⁵¹ A Comprehensive History of Texas, I., 170-71.

⁵² A Comprehensive History of Texas, I., 171.

⁵³ Newspaper Clipping.—Austin Papers.

⁵⁴ Cos to Ayuntamiento of Columbia, August 1, 1835.—Austin Papers.

for some time, while Gritten could return to San Felipe for enlarged powers to treat with Cos. On August 9, they forwarded a letter to the general, explaining their delay, and expressing the hope that he would receive them favorably;⁵⁵ but a notice soon arrived from him that he would listen to no negotiations from the Texans until they surrendered to him the men that he desired, and so, under these circumstances, Barrett and Gritten did not proceed to Matamoras.

In addition, moreover, to the irritation caused by the demand for these arrests, Captain T. M. Thompson, of the schooner *Correo*, who had been sent by Cos to make investigations at Anahuac, was acting very imprudently. He declared himself commandant of all the ports between Matamoras and the Sabine river, and by confining his operations chiefly to the shores of Galveston Bay, interfered extensively in the private affairs of the citizens.⁵⁶ And though, in reply to the San Felipe conference of July 17th, General Cos might write that the Supreme Government had always made a distinction between the "faithful" and the "faithless," it was being gradually forced upon the consciousness of the Texans that in practice the annoyances of Mexico's petty officials fell upon all alike.

BEGINNING OF OPPOSITION.

On July 14th, indeed, the citizens of Harrisburg had met, and while declaring themselves loyal Mexicans, they resolved that the constitution was about to be overthrown "by the power of General Santa Anna," and invited all the republicans of Mexico to help them gather up the "scattered fragments of that constitution which had been the boast of one of the proudest nations of the earth."⁵⁷ And

⁵⁵ Barrett and Gritten to Cos, August 9, 1835.—Bexar Archives.

⁵⁶ Texas Republican, September 19, 1835.

⁵⁷ Texas Republican, August 22, 1835. One patriotic resolution of this meeting was, "That if any citizen leave Texas during her struggle, his property shall be confiscated for the public good."

three days later the people living along the Lavaca and Navidad rivers assembled, and after voting a lack of confidence in the republicanism of Santa Anna, declared that they would "oppose any force that might be introduced into Texas for any other than constitutional purposes." They recommended that the reinforcements expected at Bexar be intercepted, and ordered the militia to hold themselves in readiness to march on the shortest notice.⁵⁸

At about this time, too, the war party seem to have extended their agitations to the United States: an article in a Louisiana paper of July 25th announces positively that Santa Anna "is now about to enter Texas with an army, to murder, destroy, and drive from that country those who were invited there, and who raised from a wilderness that which is now a flourishing, happy, and contented people." Several "highly respectable citizens of Texas" were said to be already in the city, and upon the arrival of others, who were "hourly expected," a general meeting was to consider "the dreadful state of our friends, relations, and once fellow-citizens, and adopt such measures for their relief in the present emergency as affection may dictate and justice require."⁵⁹

To the observer of to-day it is evident that by this time a conflict was almost inevitable. The demands for the surrender of Zavala and the leaders of the hostile party, with rumors of the steps that would be taken to enforce the demands, together with accounts of Thompson's overbearing behavior at Anahuac, were assiduously circulated by

⁵⁸ Brown, I., 297-99. These resolutions seem to indicate a good deal of hostility to Mexico, but it is possible that, were the proceedings read in full, this would be considerably softened. James Kerr, writing to T. J. Chambers, July 5, 1835 (Bexar Archives), says: "The inhabitants of La Vaca and Navidad are inclined to attend to their ranches and estates, and they say that if the government wishes to seize those criminals and collect the legal duties in the custom houses, it may do so." Yoakum dates this meeting July 19.

⁵⁹ Texas Republican, August 22, 1835.

the war party; and exaggerated reports of this activity reaching General Cos in turn, increased the uneasiness of the authorities. And though it is almost certain that even yet the majority were opposed to any radical measures,⁶⁰ the preaching of the war party had made them suspicious and prepared them to misinterpret anything that Mexico might do. Under these circumstances, therefore, it is difficult to see how war could have been averted by any save an omniscient tactician.

A SCHOLARLY APPEAL FOR MODERATION.

Nevertheless, the undoubted exigencies of the time now brought forth the most scholarly appeal to the reason and loyalty of the colonists that appeared throughout this year of manifold resolutions. In reading the proceedings of too many of the public meetings one is painfully struck by the labored efforts of the people to cast their resolutions in dignified, formal phraseology; but the resolutions prepared for the San Jacinto meeting, of August 8th, by David G. Burnet, show none of this awkward pursuit of form. After reviewing and accepting as true the reports that the federal government was subverted, they still expressed "a cheering confidence in the distinguished citizens of our adopted country, * * * * That they will organize a system of government in accordance with the spirit of the 19th century, * * * * with such a distribution of the three cardinal powers as will assure to each individual all the guarantees necessary to rational political liberty." They declared that they had always considered Mexico the rightful sovereign of the territory of Texas, and while believing it a duty to guard their rights from all infringement, they also felt themselves under "a sacred obligation to preserve our names untarnished by the imputation of parricidal ingratitude." They considered "*names* as the mere signification of *things*," and said that they were not

⁶⁰ Gritten to Ugartechea, July 5, 1835.—Bexar Archives.

"so obstinately prejudiced in favor of the term 'federal republic' as * * * * to reject another government purely because it has assumed a different external sign or denomination." And they resolved "That although the citizens may have the *political* right to reject the new Government of Mexico, * * * * we do very seriously question the policy of doing so, unless constrained by imperious circumstances, such as, we trust, do not and will not exist." But recognizing the necessity of united action upon the part of the colonists, they recommended the immediate calling of a convention at San Felipe.⁶¹

THE CALL FOR A CONVENTION.

This, in fact, was the one thing upon which all Texas was now agreed. It is said that by the middle of August every municipality had elected a committee of safety and correspondence, and that each was pledged to urge the calling of a consultation.⁶² A meeting of the jurisdiction of Columbia had been called on July 30th for the purpose of bringing this about, and when it adjourned until August 16th without doing anything, general dissatisfaction was prevalent at the delay.⁶³

But when this adjourned meeting reassembled on Saturday, August 15th, instead of Sunday, the sixteenth, as was originally intended, the convention was assured. They resolved that they would "not give up any individual to the military authorities," and appointed a committee of fifteen, with B. T. Archer at its head, to prepare an address to the different committees of safety, asking them to concur in the call for a convention. This committee went into a session at Velasco on August 18th, and two days later issued its address to the people. No direct suggestion of independence was offered. On the contrary, they pro-

⁶¹ Texas Republican, September 19, 1835.

⁶² Brown, I., 304.

⁶³ Texas Republican, July 25, and August 8, 1835.

fessed a sincere desire to remain attached to the Mexican government, if that were possible upon constitutional terms; but at the same time they frankly intimated their opinion that there was little hope of such a possibility. In any event, they said, the desirability of united action was obvious, and since this could be obtained in no other way, they proposed that the committees of each municipality should order the election on October 5th of five delegates to represent them in a consultation to be convened at San Felipe on the 15th of the same month.

This address, issued in the form of a circular, was accompanied by several anonymous letters, giving information, for the truth of which the committee vouched, of the arrival of Mexican troops at Goliad and Bexar, and purporting to reveal Santa Anna's plan of invasion. It was said that his first plan had been to introduce the troops slowly into Texas "for the *Express Purpose* of enforcing the revenue laws;" and that five hundred soldiers had actually embarked at Tampico in May, when the rebellion of Zacatecas broke out and they were recalled. But Zacatecas being now reduced, Santa Anna had grown impatient and had determined to overwhelm Texas with a force of ten thousand men and drive every Anglo-American across the Sabine.⁶⁴

It has already been seen, however, that information such as this, though it doubtless increased the popular anxiety, was not necessary to the securing of the convention. For a long time nothing had been needed but a self-constituted leader, and so, there was now a general endorsement of Columbia's proposals; the only amendment, in fact, being offered by the Nacogdoches committee, that the number of representatives be raised from five to seven.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Circular issued by the Committee; Texas Republican, August 22 and 29, 1835. Also letter, Milam to Johnson, July 5, 1835.—Austin Papers.

⁶⁵ Texas Republican, September 26, 1835.

AUSTIN DESPAIRS OF PEACEFUL ADJUSTMENT.

Any hope that still existed of a peaceful adjustment between Texas and Mexico was knocked flat when the loyal Austin, just arrived from his long imprisonment, held out to it no encouragement. In a speech delivered at a barbecue in Brazoria, on September 8th, he reviewed the history of Texas from the beginning of its Anglo-American colonization; and while repeating to the people Santa Anna's protestations of unalterable respect and esteem, he plainly intimated that little reliance could be placed in them. Santa Anna's plan, he thought, was unquestionably the formation of a centralized government, and, as faithful Mexican citizens, it was their duty to resist his wanton destruction of the republican constitution of 1824.⁶⁶

Four days later a meeting was held at San Felipe, and resolutions having been adopted pledging the people of that jurisdiction to support the constitution of 1824, a new committee of safety was appointed with Stephen F. Austin for its chairman.⁶⁷ Henceforth the San Felipe committee seems to have assumed by tacit consent of all the inhabitants the direction of Texas affairs, and the committee but voiced the counsel of Austin. Communication was established with every part of Texas, and information transmitted almost daily. A circular of September 18th informed the people that all hope of conciliation was gone, and that war was the only resource;⁶⁸ and this was followed by another on the 22d, vouching for the information that General Cos had landed at Copano with four hundred troops, and urging the inhabitants to arm themselves and gather at the Colorado on the 28th.⁶⁹ And in order that this might not interfere with the election of delegates to the consultation, it was advised that the polls be opened

⁶⁶ Texas Republican, September 19, 1835.

⁶⁷ Texas Republican, September 19, 1835.

⁶⁸ Texas Republican, September 18, 1835.

⁶⁹ Texas Republican, September 26, 1835.

on September 27th as well as on October 5th, the date originally fixed for the election.

All this was accordingly done, but while the Texans were marching to the Colorado the Mexicans had already arrived at the Guadalupe, and ordered the citizens of Gonzales to surrender their cannon. The events that followed are well known. The cannon was refused; the Mexicans fell back to wait for reinforcements, and on the morning of October 2d the Texans crossed the river and surprised and put them to flight. Though many of the foremost men of Texas still shrank from the suggestion of independence, and declared that they were attempting only to uphold the Mexican republican constitution of 1824, the revolution had begun.

And so, the consultation which met on October 15th and adjourned till November 3d, had not before it the task of uniting the people upon a single line of action—the purpose for which it was called—but of providing a temporary government for a united people, and supplies for an enthusiastic army.

Note.—Through the courtesy of Mr. Barker, the Association has a collection of unprinted documents bearing on this paper that it is the aim to publish as soon as possible.

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